



State of Vermont

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**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR OFFERS TIPS TO
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FILERS**

Montpelier, VT--The Vermont Department of Labor is offering tips to Vermonters seeking to start an unemployment insurance claim and those currently filing claims. The Department has been experiencing unusually high call volumes resulting in many Vermonters being frustrated with the time it takes to get a call answered at the Department's call center. "We have hired staff to help the claims lines during this time but there are tips and information folks should know", commented Labor Commissioner Patricia Moulton Powden. "We are finding now the majority of the calls are to our claimant assistance line from folks seeking additional information. Much of that information exists on our web site or in our claimant handbook but we thought offering tips and information directly to the public would be helpful", added the Commissioner.

The Department has added 9 new staff to help with the high call volume, is looking at adding additional staff, and has expanded the Claims Center's hours of operation. Staff from other divisions is being asked to pitch in with administrative work connected to establishing new unemployment claims. Work is underway to develop an on-line application to folks that are re-initiating a claim such as Vermonters signing up for extended unemployment benefits authorized by Congress. But the Department expects the worst is soon behind them. "The last two weeks of December and the first two weeks of January are always our busiest times in the claims center", commented Unemployment and Wages Division Director, Valerie Rickert. "This is when the last of the granite quarries and construction workers are laid off for the season. Things should return to somewhat normal although due to high unemployment rates, we know we will continue to see higher than average calls," she added.

To help alleviate concerns and frustrations, the Department offers these tips to folks calling in for unemployment benefits:

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- « **For those who are newly unemployed and need to initiate a claim:**
 - Call the Initial Claims line at 1-877-214-3330.
 - Try multiple times an hour versus once every few hours. Think of it like a radio contest and call multiple times. Hitting the “redial” button on your phone increases your chances of connecting as soon as a line becomes free.
 - In most cases, it will take up to two weeks to receive your first check but you will be paid benefits from the date you were separated from employment.
 - If there is a dispute with your claim, you will be notified in the mail and BE SURE to participate with all fact finding or appeals processes. This will expedite your claim and avoid any potential for problems later on.
 - Lots of information, to include Frequently Asked Questions, is available on our web site at www.labor.vermont.gov under the “Workers-Unemployed” section.
 - Contact our regional offices for assistance with job search, resume writing, and other re-employment services.
 - Consult Vermont JobLink for a listing of available jobs in Vermont and to post your resume for consideration by Vermont employers looking to hire. Go to www.vtjoblink.com.
- « **For those already receiving unemployment insurance benefits:**
 - Be sure to file your weekly claim within 6 days each week. Failure to do so will mean you will have to call the Claimant Assistance Line at 1-877-214-3332 to get your claim going again.
 - 1099 forms needed to file your personal income taxes have already been mailed to your last known address. If you do not receive your 1099, the same information may be obtained through “Claimant Applications” accessible on every Labor web page or by calling the Claimant Assistance Line.
- « **Information regarding extended unemployment benefits authorized by Congress:**
 - The Department will notify you in writing when/if those benefits become available to you.
 - You must exhaust all rights to regular benefits before the extended benefits kick in.
 - Presently there is up to an additional 20 weeks of benefits, on top of 26 weeks of state benefits, authorized by Congress. You must meet all eligibility requirements to receive these extended benefits.
 - Should Congress approve additional extensions in the coming months, you will be notified in writing, what if any, action is needed on your part.
- « **If you have exhausted your regular benefits and extended benefits or are not eligible for unemployment benefits, there may be other supports available for you. You should call 211 to learn who to contact regarding other assistance.**
- « **Watch our website at www.labor.vermont.gov for up-to-date information posted under “News”.**